

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 14012 160922Z
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AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY ACCRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 14012

LONDON FOR AF/W DIRECTOR SMITH

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, NI, OREP, AO, SF, US
SUBJECT: OBASANJO'S CONVERSATION WITH SENATOR CLARK: ANGOLA
(SECOND OF FIVE SEPTELS)

REF: LAGOS 13944 NOTAL

1. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF DISCUSSION ON ANGOLA THAT
TOOK PLACE BETWEEN HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO AND SENATOR DICK
CLARK AT DODAN BARRACKS DECEMBER 10.

2. OBASANJO SAID THAT POLICY DIFFERENCES OVER ANGOLA WERE AT THE
HEART OF US/NIGERIAN DIFFICULTIES OVER THE PAST YEAR. EARLY LAST
SUMMER NIGERIA AND THE US WERE FOLLOING THE SAME TACK, I.E.
SUPPORT FOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY REPRESENTING ALL
THREE PRINCIPAL NATIONALIST GROUPS. " POOR GARBA HERE WAS RUNNING
AROUND AFRICA PREACHING THIS AND WORKING HARD ON THIS, BASING
OUR POSITION ON THE OAU RESOLUTION OF JULY." SOUTH AFRICA'S
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PAGE 02 LAGOS 14012 160922Z

INTERVENTION, WHICH OBASANJO MAINTAINED WAS "EITHER WITH THE

SUPPORT OR THE CONNIVANCE OF THE US," FORCED NIGERIA TO CHANGE ITS POSITION. THAT INTERVENTION WAS "ABSOLUTELY UNACCEPTABLE." NIGERIA WAS ACCORDINGLY OBLIGED TO OPT FOR WHATEVER LIBERATION MOVEMENT WAS OPPOSED TO SOUTH AFRICA, "IRRESPECTIVE OF ITS IDEOLOGY." NIGERIA EXPLAINED ITS POSITION VERY CLEARLY TO THE US, BUT THERE WAS NO RESPONSE. THEN THERE WAS CONFRONTATION.

3. IF AMERICAN POLICY HAD BEEN "THE CORRECT ONE, " THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO NEED FOR CUBAN TROOPS, OR FOR THE US VETO OF ANGOLA'S ADMISSION TO THE UN ("FORTUNATELY YOU HAVE CHANGED YOUR POSITION ON THIS"), OR FOR THE SEMI-HOSTILE SITUATION THAT CONTINUES TO EXIST BETWEEN ANGOLA AND THE US. NIGERIA BELIEVES THAT SO LONG AS THE US OPPOSES THE MPLA, SO LONG WILL THERE BE CUBAN TROOPS. "I AM NOT PROUD THAT THOSE TROOPS ARE THERE, BUT I WON'T ASK THE MPLA TO GET RID OF THEM UNTIL THE MPLA FEELS SECURE." OBASANJO SAID THE US SHOULD TAKE "POSITIVE ACTION" TO REMOVE THE CAUSES OF MPLA'S INSECURITY. INSTEAD THE US WAS TURNING A BLIND EYE TO WHAT WAS GOING ON.

4. OBASANJO SAID THE US SHOULD CUT "ITS CLANDESTINE SUPPORT, DIRECT OR INDIRECT," TO THE MPLA'S ENEMIES. THE LONGER THE CUBANS REMAIN IN ANGOLA, THE MORE ENTRENCHED THEY BECOME. US SHOULD FORMALLY RECOGNIZE ANGOLA, AND SHOULD DENY ACCESS FOR UNITA AND FNLA LEADERS TO US MISSIONS IN ANGOLA'S BORDER COUNTRIES. OBASANJO SAID NETO HAD TOLD HIM IN JUNE THAT HE WANTED IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE US. OBASANJO HAD NO DOUBT ABOUT HIS SINCERITY; " THE NEXT MOVE IS UP TO YOU."

5. CLARK SHARPLY QUESTIONED OBASANJO ON HIS REFERENCE TO CONTINUING US SUPPORT OF UNITA AND FNLA. HE ASKED WHETHER NIGERIA HAD ANY EVIDENCE. OBASANJO REPLIED "WITH THE US ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE-- I WOULD NEED EVIDENCE TO PROVE THE CONTRARY."" CLARK REVIEWED HIS PERSONAL ROLE IN CONGRESSIONAL ACTION CUTTING OFF US MILITARY SUPPLIES TO ANGOLA AND EXPLAINED RECENT LEGISLATION THAT OBLIGES THE ADMINISTRATION TO REPORT TO CONGRESS ON ANY COVERT ACTIVITIES. CLARK SAID THAT IF WHAT OBASANJO IMPLIED WERE TRUE, "THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE US ARE OPERATING AGAINST THE LAW." OBASANJO SAID HE WAS NONETHELESS SKEPTICAL, AND ASKED WHO WAS SUPPLYING THIS ASSISTANCE IF IT WAS NOT THE US. CLARK CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 LAGOS 14012 160922Z

SUGGESTED IT WAS SOUTH AFRICA. OBASANJO SAID THE US HAD THE ABILITY TO BRING PRESSURE AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA.

6. NOTING ANGOLA'S SERIOUS ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, CLARK SAID HE WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT EARLY RELEASE OF CUBAN TECHNICIANS, WHO HE UNDERSTOOD WERE HIGHLY USEFUL. HE SAID HE NONETHELESS LOOKED FORWARD TO A NORMALIZATION OF US RELATIONS WITH ANGOLA. HE MENTIONED A PROPOSED

PROGRAM OF US FOOD ASSISTNACE THROUGH THE WGRLD FOOD
PROGRAM. HE AND OBASANJO AGREED IT WAS IMPORTANT TO GIVE ANGOLA
"THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE TRULY NON-ALIGNED," AN OPTION THAT CLARK
CLAIMED WAS NOW NOT OPEN "IN VIEW OF CONTINUING US HOSTILITY TO
THE MPLA REGIME."
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